

To: Regional and Corporate Services Committee

Date: 2018-07-10

From: Johannes Bendle, Planner I

File No: 8500-30-26237

Subject: FVRD Regional Transit Service Update – Bus Routes #66 Fraser Valley Express, #11 Agassiz-Harrison, and #22 Hope.

INTENT

This report is intended to advise the Fraser Valley Regional District Board of information pertaining to transit service updates for bus routes #66 Fraser Valley Express, #11 Agassiz-Harrison and #22 Hope. Staff is not looking for a recommendation and has forwarded this information should members want more clarification to discuss the item further.

STRATEGIC AREA(S) OF FOCUS

Foster a Strong & Diverse Economy

Support Healthy & Sustainable Community

Provide Responsive & Effective Public Services

PRIORITIES

Priority #2 Air & Water Quality

BACKGROUND

The Fraser Valley Regional District (FVRD) coordinates three sub-regional transit services: Fraser Valley Express (FVX #66), Agassiz-Harrison (AGH #11), and Hope (#22). Due to increasing demand the FVRD is doubling the weekend service on the FVX route, adding summer holiday service on the AGH route and adding a transit bus stop at Chawathil Reserve on the Hope route. The FVRD is expanding the service of all three sub-regional transit services while operating within the existing FVRD funding budgeted for each transit service.

DISCUSSION

Fraser Valley Express (FVX) Route #66

The FVX transit service was introduced in 2015 to offer passengers bus service between Chilliwack and Abbotsford to Carvolth Exchange where passengers are able to connect to TransLink's transit network serving Metro Vancouver. The FVX initially offered 17 round trips on weekdays and four round trips on Saturdays. In Fall 2017 Sunday and holiday service was introduced at four round trips per day to match existing Saturday service levels. The FVX has been a popular transit service and has seen ridership numbers increasing with 107,000 passengers (2016/2017) to 126,000 passengers (2017/2018). The popularity of the service has resulted in demand for expanding the frequency of the service.

The FVRD and BC Transit have identified the need to double the Saturday, Sunday and holiday service which will expand the service from four round trips to eight round trips per day for the Fall of 2018. This transit service expansion is informed by previous FVX background studies, service reports and public engagement and responds to customer feedback about the low frequency of weekend and holiday service.

Currently the FVX weekend and holiday schedule runs on a 2 hour 45 minute frequency; however, by doubling the service, the frequency will increase to between 1 hour 30 minutes and 1 hour 15 minutes. Public engagement results summarized in the *FVRD Fall 2018 Transit Service Change Plan*, indicate that 75% of survey respondents preferred weekend/holiday trips be distributed evenly throughout the day. As a result, the four new round trips are distributed evenly as shown in the table below.

FVX Current & Additional Trips – Weekends & Holidays

Depart Chilliwack Exchange	Depart Chilliwack Exchange
grey = existing trip – blue = new trip	
Departs 9:00 am	Departs 10:15 am
Departs 10:15 am	Departs 11:30 am
Departs 11:45 am	Departs 1:00 pm
Departs 1:00 pm	Departs 2:15 pm
Departs 2:30 pm	Departs 3:45 pm
Departs 3:45 pm	Departs 5:00 pm
Departs 5:15 pm	Departs 6:30 pm
Departs 6:30 pm	Departs 7:45 pm

The impressive FVX ridership numbers have generated enough revenue to finance the expansion of service hours, without requiring additional tax requisition. The estimated annual FVRD cost for the service expansion is \$94,642. With the additional service it is anticipated that the FVX will continue to experience revenue growth.

Agassiz-Harrison (AGH) Route #11

The Agassiz-Harrison transit service offers bus service between Chilliwack and Harrison Hot Springs via Agassiz. The route currently offers weekday and Saturday service and Sunday service July 1st to Labour Day. This year for the first time the route will provide Sunday-level service on statutory holidays throughout the summer. The route will offer holiday (Sunday-level) service on Canada Day (Sunday, July 1st, and Monday, July 2nd), BC Day (Monday, August 6th) and Labour Day (Monday, September 3rd).

BC Transit has planned a promotional campaign to advertise the new service. The new service will be advertised in the interior bus cards, on the website and through social media ads. The Rider's Guide has also been updated to reflect the summer services.

The additional 30 service hours required to offer the Sunday-level service on statutory holidays throughout the summer will be covered within the existing Annual Operating Agreement (AOA). The AOA includes additional hours to account for possible extra operating hours due to traffic or other service delays on the route. Therefore, the increased level of service will be taken from hours already accounted for and will not come at an additional cost to the service.

Hope Route #22

The Hope transit service was introduced in Fall 2017. The route offers bus service between Agassiz and Hope. From Agassiz passengers are able to transfer to the AGH Route #11 for travel to Chilliwack. The Hope transit service currently offers four round trips Monday to Friday and four round trips on Saturdays. The FVRD, at the request of Chawathil First Nation, is working with BC Transit to add an additional bus stop to the transit service route. The FVRD has already entered into partnership with Seabird Island Band and Cheam First Nation so working with Chawathil First Nation is a continuation of the FVRD's collaboration with First Nations to create partnerships on transit services.

The Chawathil Reserve is located 10 km west of downtown Hope off of Highway 7. The bus stop is proposed for the west side of Chawathil Road just off of Highway 7. The start of the service is still to be determined but based on ongoing discussions the FVRD expects the service to be operational by September. Chawathil First Nation will cover the cost of the number of service hours required to add the stop to the route. Chawathil First Nation will also cover the cost of paving required for the bus stop and any bus stop infrastructure.

COST

The expanded transit services proposed are included in the 2018-2019 AOA. The FVX route #66 expanded service is supported by existing revenues. The AGH route #11 expanded service on statutory holidays is covered by the existing AOA. The additional hours required and infrastructure for the bus stop on Chawathil Reserve will be implemented through a service agreement with Chawathil First Nation.

CONCLUSION

The FVRD is expanding the transit service of the FVX route #66, AGH route #11, and Hope route #22. The expansions in service are due to demand for increasing weekend and holiday service and demand for access to transit service. The expansion in transit services are being financed within existing budgets for each transit service.

COMMENTS BY:

Alison Stewart, Manager of Strategic Planning

Reviewed and supported

Barclay Pitkethly, Director of Regional Programs

Reviewed and supported

Mike Veenbaas, Director of Financial Services

Not available for comment.

Paul Gipps, Chief Administrative Officer

Reviewed and supported